

MACAULAY'S CHARACTER OF WILLIAM III

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prorogue Parliament, and when Halifax gave advice against it William said ' hee was so weary of them, hee could not bear them ; there must be a recess/ '

The evolution of William's political opinions is not difficult to trace. He did not share either the passions of the Whigs »or their political theories, though circumstances obliged him to depend upon them when his reign began. The Whig view of the royal function seemed absurd to him. He told Halifax that ' a king of England who will governe by law as hee must do, if hee hath conscience, is the worst figure in Christendome. Hee hath power to destroy the nation and not to protect it/ He started with a prejudice against the extreme Whigs before he came to the throne. On December 30, 1688, he told Halifax that ' the common-wealth party was the strongest in England ' , which Halifax thought a perfectly erroneous view instilled into William by members of that party for their own ends. Anyhow, William said bluntly ' hee did not come over to establish a commonwealth/ After he became king he thought the extreme Whigs no better than republicans. In July 1689 he asserted that he had discovered plainly that their design was to establish a commonwealth. As indications of this design he pointed out the reluctance of the Whigs in the

Convention to grant him an adequate and independent revenue. He thought they were always trying to lop the rights or the revenue of the Crown. ' The persuading him to give away the chimney money was with a design for a commonwealth/ ² The Habeas Corpus Act was a very inconvenient piece of legislation. He thought the Declaration of Rights went a little too far, and ' Said it was to be considered, whether all the articles in the Declaration, were to

¹ Halifax, ii. 207.

3 Cl Macaulay, III, 1346 (ad) ; Burnet, ii. 13.